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Forbidden Lovers

the Garden of sinners FanBook 06

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"Oh, they aren't here."

I awoke in the afternoon and headed outside. Having said that, I didn't have anywhere in particular to go to, and the presence of people in Garan no Dou, where I dropped in, was weak. The proprietress of this office, Tohko, wasn't at her place by the window, and the curious sole employee, Mikiya, was also no where to be found.

Well...normally, today, generally known as a holiday, they shouldn't have been here.

However...

'Sorry, Shiki. The chief asked me to take care of a meeting that she says she can't drop no matter what tomorrow. No, that's already coercion isn't it? Yeah.

If you rely on the words that Mikiya said with a completely tired voice over the phone last night, you should find it strange that those two aren't here.

I take a step in and look around the inside of the office once again. They say that the once disorderly room was considerably more organized after Mikiya started to work, and became better but...still, when I think about this scene, I don't even want to consider the disaster this place was before. Anyway, there are too many things.

"Hm?"

Suddenly, I faintly feel someone's presence and look.

The sofa for customers. In that place that was a blind spot from the entrance, one figure. I recognized her from the back.

"Azaka?"

I quietly call out, but there's no response. When I went around to make sure directly, while I wondered about the lack of a reaction, my doubts were immediately cleared.

"Oh."

It's natural that there wasn't a response...and that her presence was weak.

In front of my eyes, reclining on the sofa, neither Tohko nor Mikiya, a third person, Kokutou Azaka, was exposing an innocent sleeping face.

On top of the table right in front, there was a crumpled up piece of paper. When I, for no particular reason, take it in my hand, and try to open it up and smooth it out, characters like scribbles appear.

【To: Azaka. Sorry, urgent business that I couldn't drop no matter what came up, so today's lecture is canceled. I'll also borrow Kokutou. Allow me.

P.S. I guess that curious people who can come here are rare, but just to be sure, if I could ask you to look after the place, as a master, I'd be very happy.】

Ah. If you looked at this letter from Tohko to Azaka, you'd understand.

This holiday was precious to Azaka. When she sneaked out of her academy and came all the way here, on top of having her appointed lecture and other things skipped out on, even Mikiya, whom she could only see once in a while, was taken away. That would make her want to take it out on the letter and sleep. I felt just a little sorry for Azaka.

Anyhow, I understood that Tohko and Mikiya were out.

Azaka is sleeping and waiting for those two to return.

Well, then what should I do?

I guess waiting here until Azaka wakes up is also okay. It's not like I have any reason or anywhere to go.

That we, people who were skipped out on, were waiting here insinuatingly, was amusing.

Besides, if Azaka wakes up, at least I won't be bored.

"All right."

I decided. I sat down near the opposite side of the sofa Azaka was sleeping on.

I don't have anything else to look at, so my gaze naturally turns toward Azaka.

That innocent sleeping face was something that didn't let you feel the power her heart had when she was up, and was appropriately cute for her age.

If only it was always like this. For only a moment, that thought went by, but I immediately thought better of it. Just imagining a graceful and obedient Azaka gave me goose bumps.

Yeah. I actually prefer the usual Azaka.

When I imagine how flustered Azaka would look the moment she recognized me after waking up, my face naturally goes slack.

This is Azaka we're talking about, so she'll probably even calmly snap at her confusion.

Yes, this girl always charged at me and something else.

Azaka overcame the boundary I was laying out, and clashed her words and feelings with mine.

Even though Ryougi Shiki was supposed to hate those kinds of troublesome things—no, even though she still undoubtedly hates them.

For some reason, she only doesn't feel that way when Azaka is involved.

Instead, there are moments you can only think of as pleasant.

I think that that's probably because Azaka is straightforward with me.

Unreserved words. There's no falsehood with Azaka, who charges at me directly.

That way she is, with only one side.

Words that provoke me, and words that deny are like that too. There's no trick or malice there, so it's clear and much more refreshing. That's why I don't back down or really get angry.

The dangerous exchanges I have with Azaka now are like greetings. It seems that it's really bad for the heart if you look at it from the point of view of Mikiya, who listens nearby, but I secretly enjoy those exchanges—almost like the conversations regular friends would have with each other.

Somehow, it seems like I like Azaka more than I thought I did. I finally realized that after all this time.

And while I was idly gazing at Azaka's sleeping face again, I consider something.

Now that I think about it, these siblings who carry the surname Kokutou are one of the few people who can talk to Ryougi Shiki equally.

The outsiders that overcame the boundary the misanthropic Ryougi Shiki lay out in order to not get involved with anyone.

Perhaps...maybe, people who were necessary in filling the hole that had opened in her heart.

By accepting me, who was supposed to have been out of the circle, Mikiya took my blindfold away.

By denying me, Azaka paradoxically recognized the fact that I was still in the circle.

Stillness and motion. Acceptance and denial. While completely reversing the vector, these siblings recognized and received me.

I'm truly amazed.

These siblings, with exactly opposite approaches, conveyed the exact same thing to me.

—And, as if it was natural.

"Fu fu."

Somehow, it was strangely funny, and I laughed without thinking. Trying to involve their

selves with me, at a curious time. Mikiya and Azaka were undoubtedly siblings
And though I can't see them right now because they're closed, I think their clear, black eyes, which look directly in my direction without cowardice, are really alike
Without getting tired of it, I continue to gaze at Azaka's sleeping face
Perhaps because that sleeping face looked so comfortable, eventually, drowsiness assailed me
Perhaps because I'm basically nocturnal, the fact that I become sleepy at this time isn't strange
If it was Tohko who was here, I'd definitely excuse myself from the choice of sleeping, but
if it's Azaka, I guess it's okay
After a few moments of indecision, My thoughts easily settle, and I leave my body to sleep and close my eyelids
With a consciousness that immediately falls head over heels, I thought in the end

like this
That being able to think that it'd be okay to be like this was something like a miracle

◇

When I opened my eyes, what came into my sight was the sleeping face of my hated rival in love
"What?"
That is, in a situation where nothing made sense, I let an idiotic voice leak
Eh, wait, why is Shiki?
Because I thought that this was Touko-shi's office, and, wait, huh?
"I was sleeping."
Murmuring dazedly, I finally understood something obvious
And, while I was sleeping, Shiki came along. If you calmed down and looked, the fact that Shiki was here wasn't unusual in itself
After I was apprenticed to Touko-shi, I visited this office many times, but Shiki was usually there
Although, today is first time she was sleeping
No really, why is this girl sleeping in a place like this?
Recovering from surprise and confusion, I observe Shiki fixedly once again
In Japanese clothes as always. Androgynous features. Almost like a sculpture, Shiki doesn't make the slightest movement
—That was a tranquil sleep
It was as if she was dead. wait, what kind of stupid things am I thinking about? I wonder if I'm still half asleep and lightly shake my head, clearing the thoughts that rose up in my mind
Really, really stupid
Even if you don't look closely, you can see Shiki's shoulders faintly move up and down with her breaths, and you can even hear her breathing
"—"
Ah, but there's one thing. Shiki's sleep was so quiet, even I, who was watching, almost couldn't stand not holding my breath

An ephemerality that seemed as if it would crumble if touched. A dangerous beauty that is beautiful because of its fragility
Recognizing it is so annoying I can't stand it, but the form called Ryougi Shiki was Beautiful
If I were to compare it with something, I would say that it was like an unsheathed Japanese sword
Yes, Shiki had a sharpness that could wound and reject someone somewhere
But, I can't really feel that sharpness coming from the Shiki who's exposing her sleeping face in front of me right now
Ahh, geez. I really don't get it. Why would this girl sleep defenselessly in front of me of all places?
Anyways, I want her to give me a break. This makes it look like Shiki trusts me or something. Although, to me, concerning Mikiya, Shiki is a rival I should hate
If she's shown to me so defenseless like this, I'll be troubled
Wait, wait a minute
I wasn't thinking, but that means that in this situation, my sleeping face was seen completely by Shiki, doesn't it?!
It was such a failure that I was seriously troubled
Uu, if there was a hole, I'd crawl into it
This is all Shiki's fault—I gather my anger and glare at Shiki
Then
"U"
I saw a change in the sleeping face of Shiki, who had been like a statue until a moment ago
A deep wrinkle forms on her brow and her expression changes. It looks like she's having a terrible nightmare
"Shiki?"
She looked like she was in so much pain that I unthinkingly reached out my hand
A moment when my fingertips would or wouldn't touch Shiki's shoulder
"—!"
As if they were flicked, Shiki's eyes open, and
"What?"
My sight spun around like a circle. I heard my idiotic voice as if it was someone else's problem
A slight shock to my back
When I came to, I was being held down on top of the sofa by Shiki
When I try to push her aside right away, I feel a slight pain and stiffen. At the edge of my vision I saw that the knife Shiki was holding in a reverse grip was pointed at my throat
Uwah, if I moved the wrong way, this wouldn't end as a joke
"Hey Shiki, what do you think"
you're doing, is what I tried to shout, and it didn't come out
The moment I made eye contact with Shiki, who was still on top of me, the anger and everything else I had been gathering up, vanished
"—"
I caught my breath
Point-blank, I was shot through by Shiki's gaze
I—probably, perceived Ryougi Shiki's real nature for the first time at this moment
That is, those azure mystic eyes that pierce death
Whether Shiki had the feeling or not, I don't know. But, I thought, I had already accepted

that I was going to be killed as if it was obvious

Eyes that were like transparent murderous intent taken form

A moment when, before I knew it, like some magic trick, I thought that rather than the edge of the knife I had grown used to seeing that was pointed at my throat, I was going to be killed by those eyes

Then, I guess there's no helping it. That's what I had gone and thought. Probably, because it was so beautiful.

Yes, without fear, I was just fascinated.

While I was unable to avert my eyes no matter what, Shiki and I both stared at each other.

One second, or a few minutes.

As my thoughts, which had been paralyzed, began to restart, the anger I had toward this incomprehensible situation began to boil again.

I wonder what this is, if your hand was bitten by your pet dog, you might feel this way. A little like the feeling that you were betrayed.

Recognizing that was annoying again, and, in any case, I couldn't be swallowed by Shiki's eyes anymore, so I put strength into my eyes, and stare back at her.

—Then.

Azaka. So, she finally recognized me. I had a feeling that she mouthed that.

Not even one ripple had passed across Shiki's eyes. Those eyes that were tinged with inhuman heat rapidly come back. What rose to the surface instead was faint confusion—no, is this fright?

It was something like when you went and made a mistake on a mere impulse that you can't take back, or a child whose parents discover the prank she wanted to hide. Those were the kinds of looks that could rise in those eyes.

Shiki's eyes definitely shook—for one moment.

She immediately tried to regain her original indifference—and failed. Probably, she thinks she's acting how she usually does, but that's different. I discovered that below the surface that calmed waves still raged about.

—And then, I understood. This situation right now was beyond what Shiki expected, and something like an accident.

That's why, above me, Shiki probably doesn't know what to do.

I wonder if it's because I understood that somehow, I didn't become that surprised by what this freed, incoherent Shiki said.

"Azaka."

A hard bitterness ran somewhere in that voice.

It made you think about a pane of glass with countless cracks in it that seemed about to shatter into pieces even now.

"Aren't you afraid of me?"

Even though Shiki, who asks that question, has the same indifferent to everything expression she always has, as expected.

I wonder why. I thought that she looked like a child who was about to cry even now.

"Because you always look like you're going to hurt yourself. I can't leave you alone."

—Suddenly, I remembered the words my brother used when he talked about Shiki one time.

At that time, I laughed at it.

Right now, I can't. That's because I, so much that it made me frustrated, realized that those words were the truth.

In the depths of those eyes you can't see feelings in, I found a Shiki who was like a lost child that strayed from her parents and was at a loss.

Ahh, geez. I can't put up with this. I don't want the person in front of me to make that expression for even one more second.

That's why, I'll say it for her.

"Stupid Shiki. Before asking something worthless like that, hurry up and put that dangerous thing away."

"Ah."

Shiki opens her eyes like she woke up from a dream, and after a momentary pause, the knife fell on the floor with a clatter.

But that was it. Shiki is still on top of me, and looks down at me in a daze.

It looks like she still hasn't woken up from her bad dream yet, doesn't it?

I sigh, and then gather strength into my body, which I could move now.

"Hurry up and—"

While saying that, I reach out my arm as if to pet her head.

Just before I touch her, I hesitate for a moment. However, Shiki shows no sign of refusing, and only looks at me suspiciously.

With that, I prepared myself. All that's left is to gather all my strength into my abdominals and arm, and deal with a moment's pain—!

"Wake up already, stupid Shiki—!"

"—Wh—"

Thud. A dull sound came from our foreheads.

A fully released, full power head butt.

Shiki, who, as expected, was neither prepared for nor was expecting this, fell off of me, touched her knees on the floor, and, without a sound, bent double in agony.

"Oww— you, why the hell did you do that for, all of a sudden—?"

I'll answer with resentful lecturing words that sound the most hateful for her.

"Hmph, it's called shock therapy. Well, you woke up a little, didn't you?"

"Mu."

I guess remembering the way she had been just before, Shiki furrowed her brow. The girl who embarrassedly averted her gaze from me this time was the usual Shiki.

I exhale at that, though, even I don't know what feeling that would trouble myself.

"Azaka."

Shiki, who was growling, straightened up and called out to me.

"That is."

I interrupt Shiki, who was probably trying to apologize.

"Ahh, it was an accident, an accident, a head-on collision that happened when we passed by. I'm not bothered by it, or anything."

I say that while raising the upper half of my body.

Yes, it was probably just bad luck. I'm really not angry at Shiki.

"That's why you don't have to worry about it either, Shiki."

"Azaka."

It looked like Shiki wasn't satisfied with my words.

"But, I could have killed you."

Shiki says this in a voice that sounded like it was about to disappear.

I did think that I was going to be killed, but still.

The fact that, rather than something like that, I was angrier that this girl had an expression like this right now might have meant that there was something wrong with me.

"—Ahh, God, why do I have to say this?!"

I lose myself to my boiling irritation and scratch my head.

With a snap, I point my finger at Shiki, who is surprised by my sudden exasperation.

"I decided that I wasn't bothered by it, so it's not something you have to worry about!

I already knew that you were dangerous a long time ago!

Anyways, if you're like this, I'll be troubled in a lot of ways, so snap out of it!"

I especially said that because I want to think that it was mainly because of me!

After I declared everything I wanted to say, and was breathing heavily, Shiki, who digested my words, tilted her head.

"Why would you be troubled?"

"Gu."

No, that's why? Troubling things are troubling, stupid Shiki.

That's because at this time, Kokutou Azaka is,

"Beating up Ryougi Shiki is my aim, so I have to have you, my target, be almost impudent, or there's no point, is there?"

Yes, that's why I have to have Ryougi Shiki be almost hateful, or I'd be troubled.

Otherwise, I'd really not know what to do with these feelings.

"So, I'm not afraid of some one like you. Also, I'll have you be your usual self. Got a problem with that?"

I become desperate and glare at Shiki.

Even if you don't think hard about it, I declared to defeat her. Even though I was swept away by the atmosphere of this place, there's a limit to how stupidly honest you can be, isn't there?!

Then, speaking of that Shiki who had been declared to be beaten, after looking amazed with her eyes wide open, snickering, she hung her head and, bit by bit, her shoulders started to shake. It looks like there are even tears in the corners of her eyes.

"I really realized something now, Azaka."

"What?"

I can't see her expression, but I knew she was laughing from her voice, so it disappointingly hits me.

Shiki raised her head and matched her eyes with mine.

"It looks like I really like that part of you."

"Wha—"

With those words that don't suit Shiki and that gentle look I see as if for the first time, failing, my heart skipped a beat.

Probably, although I don't want to admit it, my face is red, too. It was that much of an unexpected surprise attack. Straightness without any pretenses. That's too cowardly.

"Wha, whawha, what are you saying you stupid Shiki—!"

It seemed like something that couldn't be taken back would happen if I was in front of this Shiki any more, so I turned by back on Shiki and ran away.

I of course ignore the words of Shiki, who was calling to me.

I get the feeling that, on the way, I bumped into various things and grandly messed up the room, but I made it so I wouldn't think about that either.

Anyway, I can't be in front of Shiki now.

Jumping out of the room, I slammed the door shut. After Shiki disappeared from my sight, I finally regain a bit of composure.

"Ahh, geez, really."

I lean against the door and slide down.

Burning cheeks and a pulse that still won't calm down. The meaning of that.

"What is that?"

I murmur that, and this time, it was I who looked up at the sky like a lost child that strayed from her parents and was at a loss.

—Azaka doesn't know.

The soft voice that was gently, as if lovingly, spun.

"Thank you so much, Azaka."

Those were undecorated, unadorned words from her herself.

—And,

Touko and Mikiya, who returned soon after, would find a red-faced, greatly troubled Azaka on the floor in front of the room, and a Shiki who was in such a good mood that even an outsider could tell in one glance inside the room, and would tilt their heads, but, that's another story.

The End

I wondered if Shiki's and Azaka's love was like this and I jammed them together.
If you would be so kind as to let me know what you thought, I will dance wildly, seriously.

Raimu/Circle: Sadamekairo

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